

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. 1. A method of obtaining one or more proposals for research and development (R&D) in a particular area of technology from a supplier database, the method comprising the steps of:
  - 3 identifying at least one keyword parameter;
  - 4 identifying one or more potential R&D suppliers by employing the at least one keyword parameter to search the supplier database;
  - 6 identifying one or more qualified R&D suppliers by employing evaluation criteria to evaluate the one or more potential R&D suppliers;
  - 7 soliciting a proposal from the one or more qualified R&D suppliers.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying at least one keyword parameter comprises:
  - 5 eliciting information from an R&D buyer to develop a clear understanding of the particular area of technology; and
  - 6 identifying at least one keyword parameter that will target the one or more potential R&D suppliers.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D supplier further comprises the step of:
  - 3 obtaining the R&D buyer's approval of each qualified R&D supplier.

1 4. The method of claim 1:  
2 further comprising the step of preparing a request for proposal announcement; and  
3 wherein the step of soliciting a proposal from one or more qualified R&D supplier comprises  
4 the step of providing each qualified R&D supplier with the request for proposal  
5 announcement.

1 5. The method of claim 4 wherein the step of soliciting a proposal comprises the steps of:  
2 providing each qualified R&D supplier with a nondisclosure agreement; and  
3 providing each qualified R&D supplier with the request for proposal announcement only  
4 after each executes the nondisclosure agreement.

1 6. The method of claim 4 wherein the step of preparing a request for proposal announcement  
2 comprises the step of:  
3 omitting the identity of an R&D buyer on whose behalf the one or more proposals are being  
4 solicited.

1 7. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more potential R&D supplier  
2 further comprises the step of:  
3 ordering each potential R&D supplier by the number of occurrences of the at least one  
4 keyword parameter on one or more Web pages associated with each.

1 8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:  
2       evaluating the one or more proposals to choose the best mix of complementary qualified  
3       R&D suppliers to fulfill the R&D.

1 9. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D supplier  
2       comprises the step of:  
3       evaluating each potential R&D supplier based upon knowledge of competition in the  
4       particular area of technology.

1 10. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D supplier  
2       comprises the step of:  
3       evaluating each potential R&D supplier based upon type of R&D supplier.

1 11. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D supplier  
2       comprises the step of:  
3       evaluating each potential R&D supplier based upon length of time that each has been  
4       supplying R&D in the particular area of technology.

1 12. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D supplier  
2       comprises the step of:  
3       evaluating each potential R&D supplier based upon past performance of each in supplying  
4       R&D in the particular area of technology.

1       13. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D supplier  
2       comprises the step of:

3       evaluating each potential R&D supplier based upon the type of R&D needed.

1       14. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one ore more qualified R&D supplier  
2       comprises the step of:

3       evaluating each potential R&D supplier based upon specialization of the particular area of  
4       technology.

1       15. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying on or more potential R&D suppliers  
comprises the steps of:

selecting from a plurality of supplier databases a supplier database related to the particular  
area of technology; and

employing at least one keyword parameter to search the selected supplier database.

1       16. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of soliciting a proposal comprises the steps of:

2       soliciting an abstract proposal from each qualified R&D supplier;

3       evaluating the abstract proposal from each qualified R&D supplier; and

4       soliciting one or more full proposals from one or more of the qualified R&D suppliers for  
5       which an abstract proposal was evaluated.

1    17. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D suppliers  
2    further comprises the steps of:

3    assembling a review panel to identify the one or more qualified R&D suppliers.

1    18. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of identifying one or more qualified R&D suppliers  
2    further comprises the steps of:

3    identifying one or more R&D experts to identify the one or more qualified R&D suppliers.

1    19. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of soliciting a proposal from one or more qualified  
2    R&D suppliers further comprises the steps of:

3    receiving a first proposal from one of the qualified R&D suppliers;

4    providing feedback on the first proposal to the one of the qualified R&D suppliers; and

5    allowing the one of the qualified R&D suppliers to submit a second proposal.

1 20. A global research and development (R&D) matching system capable of supporting the  
2 acquisition of R&D services and/or supplies from at least one of a plurality of R&D  
3 suppliers, each R&D supplier having at least one Web page identified by a universal resource  
4 locator (URL), the matching system comprising:

5 a processor;

6 a memory coupled to the processor;

7 a supplier database residing in the memory, the supplier database comprising

8 a supplier record for each of the plurality of R&D suppliers, and

9 a plurality of indices, each of the indices indexed on a unique keyword found on at least  
10 one of the plurality of Web pages associated with the plurality of R&D suppliers, each of  
11 the indices comprising

12 a plurality of index records,

13 each index record associated with each of the plurality of R&D suppliers  
14 whose at least one Web page comprises at least one occurrence of the  
15 indexed unique keyword, and

16 each index record weighted to reflect the number of occurrences of the  
17 indexed unique keyword within the at least one Web page; and

18 a supplier identification program residing in the memory, the supplier identification program  
19 capable of accepting at least one search keyword parameter as input, and the supplier  
20 identification program capable of outputting an ordered list comprising a plurality of  
21 potential R&D suppliers, whose associated at least one Web page comprises at least one  
22 occurrence of the at least one search keyword parameter.

1    21. The global research and development (R&D) matching system of claim 20:  
2        wherein the supplier database is one of a plurality of supplier databases residing in the  
3        memory, each supplier database in the plurality of supplier databases comprising a supplier  
4        record for each of a plurality of R&D suppliers in a particular area of technology; and  
5        wherein the supplier identification program is further capable of accepting a supplier  
6        database selection parameter and capable of selectively searching one or more of the plurality  
7        of supplier databases in accordance with the supplier database selection parameter.

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1 22. A program product comprising:

2       a supplier database comprising

3            a supplier record for each of a plurality of R&D suppliers, and

4            a plurality of indices, each of the indices indexed on a unique keyword found on at least

5            one of a plurality of Web pages associated with the plurality of R&D suppliers, each of

6            the indices comprising

7            a plurality of index records,

8            each index record associated with each of the plurality of R&D suppliers

9            whose at least one Web page comprises at least one occurrence of the

10            indexed unique keyword, and

11            each index record weighted to reflect the number of occurrences of the indexed unique

12            keyword within the at least one Web page; and

13            signal bearing media bearing said supplier identification program.

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15 23. The program product of claim 22 wherein the supplier database comprises a supplier record

16        for each of a plurality of R&D suppliers in a particular area of technology.

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18 24. The program product of claim 22 wherein the signal bearing media comprises transmission

19        media.

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21 25. The program product of claim 22 wherein signal bearing media comprises recordable media.